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Seventh Meeting, February 22, 1864.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, K.C.B., PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

ELECTIONS.—*R. J. Ashton, Esq.*; *G. S. Brodie, Esq.*; *R. C. Carrington, Esq.*; *Geo. Clowes, Esq., jun.*; *H. Cunningham, Esq.*; *Capt. L. Flower*; *Cornelius Grinnell, Esq.*; *J. Harvey, Esq.*; *J. C. Irving, Esq.*; *C. M. Lampson, Esq.*; *J. M'Laren, Esq.*; *Hon. E. Powys*; *Wm. Rennie, Esq.*; *R. B. Ross, Esq.*; *J. Scott, Esq.*; *N. D. J. Straton, Esq., B.A.*; *Hon. C. H. Tracy*; *G. Turnbull, Esq.*

ACCESSIONS TO LIBRARY.—‘The Cotton Trade; its bearing upon the Prosperity of Great Britain and Commerce of the American Republics, considered in connexion with the System of Negro Slavery in the Confederate States,’ by Geo. McHenry. ‘Narrative of Canadian Exploring Expeditions,’ by Professor H. Y. Hind; presented by the Author. Continuations of Transactions, Miscellaneous Periodicals, &c. &c.

ACCESSIONS TO MAP-ROOM.—Map of Africa, on 3 sheets, by E. G. Ravenstein, F.R.G.S. Map of Nord-Schlessing, by A. von Petermann, H.C.F.R.G.S.

The Paper read was—

“*Notes of a Journey from Gaza, through the interior of Arabia, to El Khatif on the Persian Gulf, and thence to Omàn, in 1862-63.* By GIFFORD PALGRAVE.

AFTER recounting how, in order to conceal their intentions, the author and his companions first wandered into Galilee, in April, 1862, where they met the Prince of Wales, while a friend at Jaffa was preparing their disguises, arranging for their camel-transport, &c., an account is given of the characters they respectively played: Mr. Palgrave passing for a doctor, as best calculated to bring him in contact with all classes. On 4th May they left Jaffa, from which period, till their arrival at Bagdad the following year, all trace of them was lost. On the 5th they reached Gaza, their final starting-point, where they stayed three weeks in order to get guides, &c. At length, on 27th May, they left in charge of some Arabs of the Beni-Ahijeh who were to conduct them as far as Maan on the Haj or pilgrimage-route from Damascus to Mecca. In this part of their road they crossed the desert of El Tih, through the rocky gorges of which they travelled for four days, usually on a s.s.e. course. After passing south so far as to be within two days of Akaba, the road turned north-east to Maan, where another detention of twelve days took place. Between this and the Jaûf province of the Upper

Nejed is waterless desert, inhabited by the most desperate of all the Bedouin tribes. In crossing this they found but one watering-place, and had nearly perished in a Samûm (simoom of ordinary current use). No living thing was encountered here, but a few serpents and lizards, till the frontier of the independent principality of Jebel Shomer had been reached, marked by the Wadi Serhan. Seven days the road continued through this valley, as far as Magua, a large encampment of the Sherarats, and on 30th June they entered Jaûf. Here are groups of lovely villages nestling under palm-trees, and two ancient Christian towers, but not of the Roman period, which command the place and the entrance of the wadi; this being a great centre of commerce for the Bedouins of Northern Arabia.

The kingdom of Jebel Shomer lies between $26^{\circ} 30'$ and 32° N., and $33^{\circ} 40'$ and 44° E., and its inhabitants are part nomad, part stationary, so that both trade and agriculture are to some extent represented, though two-thirds of the area is desert. The inhabitants of the rugged defiles which form the chief physico-geographical features of the country were in early times Christians, and long withstood El Islam. The state-religion is now Mohammedan, but it is only prominent in the towns. Away from these a few loose superstitions seem to represent the religious element.

From this point, after nineteen days' incessant intercourse with the chiefs and people, many of whom were treated medicinally, the party left for Hail, the capital of the kingdom of Jebel Shomer. Their road hitherto had but one well in seven days' march over a sterile stony tract, alternating with sandhills which reflected the heat till it became insupportable. The entire distance to Hail was ten days' journey, the latter portion through fertile valleys hemmed in by rocky mountains.

At the capital they remained six weeks, being kindly treated by the King Jelab, whose subjects are described as a fine race. There is really a considerable amount of trade here.

On 8th July they left, sixteen in number, and next day crossed the Jebel Salma, the seat in pre-Islamite times of Koleib-Waâl, whose sway extended over half Arabia. On the 10th they reached Faid, a village on the road from Bagdad to Medina, and on the 13th entered the kingdom of the celebrated sect known as the Wahabites, whose king, Ibn Saûd, is generally known as the Sultan of Nejed. The road they had just traversed had lain chiefly through long valleys running from north-east to south-west, well watered and abounding in gardens, but monotonous from the absence of mountains. At noon on the 14th, the crest of an elevation

revealed to them lying below, the plains of Kasim, the frontier province of the Wahabites; and Argûn, the seat of the local governor, was reached in safety.

Here the climate becomes tropical, as the plateau has been left behind. The kingdom extends over 10° of latitude by 7° of longitude, being bounded west by the Haj road, east by the Persian Gulf. Beradeh, a large town, was reached on the 16th, which is the seat of the Wahabite Governor of Kasim, and is a station for the Persian pilgrims. The inhabitants are enterprising traders, and cotton is successfully cultivated in the neighbourhood. A revolt in the neighbourhood detained them here seventeen days, travelling being exceedingly insecure towards the capital, in consequence of most of the inhabitants of the Beradeh district sympathising with the insurgents.

At length the chief guide of the Persian pilgrims to Mecca offered his services to conduct the party to Riadh, the capital. They passed several towns more or less in size, and on the 7th October reached the large fortified town of Mejmad. On the 9th they crossed a running stream, a phenomenon in Arabia; and in two days, after ascending another plateau, reached the town of Sadek. On the 10th they reached Hormeimeleh, birth-place of Ibn-Abd-el-Wahab, founder of the sect named after him. Here the gubernatorial residence is a palace built by Ibrahim Pasha in 1818. Thence they passed by the large ruinous town of Aujoush, at the mouth of what is called Wadi Henifeh (Orthodox Valley). This city was formerly called Moseilemeh, after a rival of Mahomet (probably the pseudoprophet of that name mentioned in Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall'), whose capital was at Riadh, and who reigned over this region. Riadh was reached at noon on the 13th October, where the King assigned them lodgings, which they inhabited till 25th November. Some of the houses here are two and even three stories high. The people are, in accordance with the dogmas of their sect, excessively fanatical and austere; and a foreigner's life is far from safe among them. On leaving, the party, now reduced to three, had to avoid the large towns; two of which, Manfuleh and Solemieh, are specified, and concealed themselves in the small valley of Yamanieh till their faithful guide and friend Khalif, who was conveying some Persian merchants, could rejoin them. On his overtaking them, they held eastward through fine plains, camping at water each night. On 1st December they were at a well, where the great caravan-routes meet from Nejded, Hasa, and Harik. Beyond this lies the Dohur Desert, an offshoot of the Great Southern Desert, two days' journey across, forming a plateau, on

descending from which by a rather abrupt descent they found themselves at Hofhuf, where is a strong citadel called Kot. Hasa, where they now were, is the richest and most populous of the Wahabite provinces, the climate almost resembling that of India. Here are workers in metals of great repute, while large quantities of textile fabrics are also manufactured.

Hence, three days' journey without Khalif brought them to El Khatif, on the Persian Gulf, where their faithful esquire rejoined them. El Khatif is surrounded by a net-work of rivers, and is buried in an interminable succession of gardens. Here the party divided, in order to obviate the risk of both losing their lives in the perilous journey to Omàn. The author now took boat, crossing the Persian Gulf twice, and ultimately on 3rd March, 1863, reached Sohar, the ancient capital of Omàn. Thence they coasted south-eastward, and when their long tedious voyage seemed just at an end, the boat was shipwrecked, nine only being saved out of twenty-one souls on board.

On 9th March they were at Watiejyeh, a day's journey from Muscat, whose monarch they visited at his country palace here, just as they were, shoeless, hatless, and in their torn shirts merely. He received them affably, and next day they went on to Muscat, the road being very difficult owing to the spurs of the Jebel Akhdar, which here run quite down to the sea. Thence, after a stay of twelve days, he proceeded up the Persian Gulf, reaching Bagdad, after a severe access of fever and delirium, on 19th April, and Beyrout on 11th July.

As a general result, all anti-Islamitic races throughout the East are to be found among the mountains.

After returning thanks to the author, the PRESIDENT said that, since the foundation of the Society, they had had no communication respecting Arabia which approached in interest the memoir of Mr. Palgrave. With respect to the exterior of the country, its ports, its promontories, and its coasts, the excellent memoirs of Captain Haines (*v. 'Journal,'* vol. ix. p. 125) and Lieutenant Welsted (*v. 'Journal,'* vol. vii. p. 20), as published in the Society's '*Journal*' had thrown a great deal of light upon that part of the subject. Again, at the present moment, Captain Constable of the Indian Navy was preparing for publication by the Admiralty, some admirable illustrations of, and important additions to, our knowledge of the geographical outlines of the coasts. But with the exception of Dr. Wallin, a Finn, who made himself a perfect Arab scholar, and who had gone a certain distance into the interior, and whose journey is also described in our volume (*v. 'Journal,'* vol. xx. p. 293), we had had no traveller to compare with Mr. Palgrave. He hoped that gentleman would explain more in detail the nature of his route and the difficulties he had to encounter, for these had been only slightly alluded to in the abstract which had been read. There were three subjects which he hoped the author would specially illustrate:—First, as to the dissimilarity between the Bedouins or nomads of the north of Arabia, with whom alone we had been acquainted, and the people of the

Wahabee country, a remarkable nation in the interior, among whom Mr. Palgrave had resided. Next, he should like to know something about that remarkable race of Sabæans or Fire-worshippers, who had never been described by any traveller in Arabia. Thirdly, as to the famous breed of Arab horses in the Nejed, Mr. Palgrave could, he was aware, communicate some curious particulars.

MR. PALGRAVE.—Before addressing myself to this Society, which I am happy and proud to meet this evening, I must apologize in a few words for the probable insufficiency of command which I have over the English language at the present moment, having been nearly eighteen years absent from England; and consequently you may suppose that either Arabic or some other language might be more familiar to my tongue: however, I will do my best (though I can hardly hope to be successful) fully to satisfy the curiosity which I know prevails among many present: it is, I fancy, pretty much the same feeling that animated myself, and which finally determined me to undertake the journey of which you have just heard an abstract—since we have often heard much of the coasts of Arabia, and we know more or less what the sea-line is, and what the border-provinces of Arabia are, but of the interior no real information has been given, at least with due accuracy and detail.

It is true we have had many valuable accounts of the formation of the Wahabite kingdom, which is one of the most remarkable phenomena which have taken place within the last century; I mean such information as may be had from the travels of Niebuhr, which are of the greatest accuracy as far as they go, or those of Burckhardt and other voyagers; but no one could describe these countries as an eye-witness: so it seemed to me important that we should at last know from an actual visit, and by our own inspection, what may be really contained in that enormous peninsula which stands out in the middle of the map like a kind of unknown country, surrounded by many others far more distant, yet much better known—such as Persia, India, and even Africa, at least at the present day. I wished to obtain as far as possible accurate information, not only of the country itself—I mean of its geographical or physical condition—but more especially of the inhabitants; the nature of their governments, their divisions, their subdivisions, and of the forms of religion and manners that might exist among them. I had already—during about ten years' residence in Syria—been led to suspect by the language of those who had been furthest towards Central Arabia (whether Arabs or others who had travelled in that direction), that there was a something positive in the way of a government, of a settled country, and of manners and institutions, to be found, could one only get at it.

But this “to get at it” was the very difficulty, on account of the extraordinary jealousy of the population with respect to Europeans; for to be known as a European traveller, at any rate in the Wahabite country, that is to say, in the central plateau of Arabia, would be exceedingly dangerous, possibly even fatal. Again, passing one's self off even as a Turk would not be exactly the way in Arabia, where Turkish dominion is not known except to be hated, as in the Wahabite country. Again, the religious character of a Dervish, though it may do very well on the road to Mecca, and in the neighbourhood of the Turkish provinces, would be an inadequate pretext to traverse the central plateau of the country. Consequently, I thought the best plan before me was to take the character of a physician; and having some slight knowledge of medicine, which I was sure would be much more than I should find before me in the country, and being sufficiently acquainted with the language to pass, if not for an Arab of *pur sang*, at any rate for an inhabitant of Aleppo or Bagdad, or one of those frontier-towns, I determined to set out under these appearances. However, in order to accomplish such a design, I was obliged to deprive myself of many means of which I should have gladly availed myself, such,

for instance, as sketching or taking notes before people, or having with me geographical implements or similar objects. Of course I was obliged to put these entirely out of the question; and not only that, but I was obliged not to appear curious, when at the very moment I was, of course, most desirous of obtaining the fullest and exactest information. In a word, I was obliged to look as great a simpleton as I possibly could, and to seem to care about nothing else but to get my fees, which was not always easy, because the Arabs only pay the doctor when he has succeeded in effecting a cure.

However, this profession answered very well in the long run, because it brought me into communication with every rank and with every character of person whom one could meet with in the countries thus traversed during a journey which lay in a more or less diagonal direction nearly across the whole of Arabia; and at the same time I could thus, under different pretexts—such as that of inquiring about patients and medicines, or similar subjects—ascertain what was going on even in the neighbouring provinces, which I was not able to visit in person. As I said, in the first place, there are no good doctors in Arabia, or else it might seem almost audacious to say that the fame of my medicines sometimes often gained me patients for several days' journey distant; and this I was glad of, not of course for the sake of the remuneration, but on account of the news which I could thus obtain of the countries from which they came. On some occasions I found persons who had come to visit me and ask for medical advice from ten or even twelve days' journey distant; and these frequently proved to me a very valuable source of information.

Well, let us cut this short; for of course, in one evening, it would be impossible to give a detailed account of all such circumstances. What has just been read is simply a skeleton of the route itself, without entering into any particular details. As, however, the honourable President has alluded to one or two points, which he very justly thinks it would be fitting to dwell upon, I will briefly mention them as far as I can in a general way; and shall be happy to answer any questions which may suggest themselves, and which may throw light upon the details.

Now, the first point that struck me in Arabia was this:—Having been always accustomed to consider Arabia as a kind of home of the Bedouins, a sort of enormous plateau of bad pasturage, over which an uncertain number of Bedouins and camels might be continually walking up and down, with tribes interchanging wars and alliances with very little fixity: I found, on the contrary, that the Bedouin population was almost limited to a desert-circle surrounding Central Arabia; and that the great mass of this Bedouin population is concentrated upon the northern frontier, upon the limits of the desert which divide Arabia from Syria, and that once within the limits of Arabia itself south of the Jâuf, which has been already visited by Dr. Wallin, the stationary or fixed population was much more numerous and infinitely more important than the Bedouin population; and that that proportion of the fixed population over the Bedouin increased the further south I went, until in the central Wahabite provinces, which are strongly marked by a mountainous line around them, in many provinces not a single Bedouin, properly speaking, could be found; the whole of the population being fixed, and the few Bedouins who subsisted in the Wahabite empire being entirely in a state of servitude—in fact, crushed by the force of the Arab Government.

At the same time, these governments and these countries existing in the interior of Arabia are well organised, exceedingly centralised; in short, they are regular and established monarchies existing with known traditions, fixed laws, and in a form better regulated, perhaps—of course I say it without any ulterior meaning but merely as giving an illustration—than most parts of the Turkish empire. Great was the effect produced on my companion, who had come with me from Syria, when arriving at the Wahabite country; and he

remarked to me, with much astonishment, that this really seemed to be a government—a thing which he had never met with in Syria.

The principal divisions of this vast region which I noticed myself, were the three following:—First, the Northern, of which the capital is Hail (visited as you know by Dr. Wallin), and which is called the province of Jebel Shomer. “Jebel” means mountain, so it is as if you were to say, “the Mountains of Shomer.” The capital of this province is called Hail, a town which at the present moment contains about 20,000 inhabitants. It is a very respectable town in its way, with a good market-place, tolerable shops, and a grand palace belonging to the Government in the centre; it is surrounded by fortifications and walls. In the town resides the actual king of the province, of the name of Zelal Ebn Rashid; and this kingdom was only founded in the time of his father, whose name was Abd Allah Ebn Rashid: so that it is a kingdom which has lasted altogether about sixty years, but which is, at the present moment, very well organised and subdivided into several provinces, in each of which is a governor dependent upon the central king, and the whole under the control of one administrative and executive power.

The second Government, which is yet more remarkable, is the Wahabite Government, which occupies nearly the whole of the interior of Arabia, stretching from the Persian Gulf to the neighbourhood of Mecca. It does not come down quite to the Red Sea, because Mecca and the adjoining province of Hejaz are under the protection of the Turkish Government. With that exception, the whole of Central Arabia belongs to the Wahabites. There, again, we have a monarchy, and a monarchy of the most absolute form—a despotism, I might say, such as perhaps has seldom been seen in Europe—a despotism to which any you might read of in history, or hear of in the newspapers, would bear but a faint resemblance. I could not have imagined such an entire political and religious absolutism as that existing in the Wahabite country, and of which I will afterwards say a few words. It is at the same time a government perfectly well organised, and divided into eleven distinct provinces, with their separate governors, and subordinate governors under these, with a certain number of military men to be levied from every town and every village, with fixed taxes and duties, and whatever attends on commercial and agricultural life.

The third main division of Arabia which I visited is the government of Omàn, which appertains to a personage who is known in our books as the Imaum of Muscat, although that title does not exist in the country itself; Muscat not being in reality the capital of the kingdom, and the title Imaum being unknown there. However, the name was given by the Portuguese in the time of Albuquerque, about 300 years ago, and writers have since retained the word Imaum, which, however, is applicable to the Wahabite king, and not to that of Omàn. The royal capital is, in fact, the town of Nezweh, which is at some distance from the coast, in the mountains higher up. Muscat is, however, at present in a way the most important town, as being that with which most European commerce is carried on. The kingdom extends from the limits of the Wahabite country along the coast, and goes away into the interior, and then down again towards the territory which is known by the name of Yemen. Between that and the Wahabite country extends the Great Desert, whither there would be very little object in going; and if one went, very little hope of returning. The Arabs themselves hardly ever traverse it in a regular way, if even they journey in it at all. I only found two Arabs of the country who were introduced to me in the village as remarkable men on this very account, that they had traversed the whole of the Great Desert. I asked them what they had seen, and what was to be found in it. They described it to me as such a desert as I had seen: in part, moving sand, little oases or semi-cultivated spots where a scattered vegetation might be found, a few dwarf palm-trees, and a little brackish water, with here and there negro.

villages and an Ethiopian population, which seemed to be, as far as I can judge, the very Himyaritic population about which a great deal has been said in France lately: they appear to be an Abyssinian colony.

I was able to stay in each of these countries a considerable time, and to make acquaintance with the chiefs and with the principal members of society, so to speak, in these different provinces. At the Wahabite capital (which is not the old capital of Derayah, for that was destroyed by Ibrahim Pasha, but the modern capital of Riadh, which is about half a day's journey to the south-east of Derayah), I remained nearly two months, lodged by the hospitality and at the expense of the Wahabee king, as his privileged physician for the time being, practising, under his royal protection, my art upon such as had the good or bad fortune to come under it. While there, being in continual communication with the court and with those who inhabited the court, and also with anybody else who came to ask my advice during that time, I was ever looking into the life and habits of the inhabitants, and watching them as closely as possible.

Now, I think it would be proceeding in accordance with the wish which has been signified if I were to say a word or two about the administrative system of the Wahabite Government and the nature of its religion. The religion of the Wahabite provinces I must touch upon, because in the East religion and government always go together in so remarkable a manner that the distinctions between nationality and nationality, or government and government, are very often mainly, if not entirely, dependent upon the different forms of religious opinion which may prevail in the countries. Such is the fact, whatever comments it may give rise to, and it will naturally give rise to a great many; and consequently, in speaking of the Wahabite Government, one must first speak of the particular form of religious opinion, in order that you may understand the form of their government. The character of their religious opinion is this: Mohammedanism in its strictest, its most primitive form, exactly such as Mohammed conceived it, such as he taught it to his companions, and such, with very little exception I believe, as they preached it. It seemed to me, when I was in the country, that I was actually living in the age of Mohammed and his companions. The exactest picture that could be drawn of their way of living, their way of thinking, and their way of acting, such as you have it in the contemporary traditions of Mohammed, you may find at the present moment in that population. This is not very astonishing, because it is an entirely unmixed population; they have never married, nor been given in marriage, with any other people. They have entirely kept aloof from other nations, they have had very little commercial correspondence with any other people, hardly any political intercourse with such, hardly anybody has ever visited them, and they hardly visit any one; in consequence they have remained, so to speak, fossilized in the midst of a changing world. I should fancy that on the face of the globe, perhaps, no nation has changed so little. They have not gone back; they have not gone forward: they have not advanced, as far as I can judge, in civilisation, from the accounts which I have of Arab life at the time at the time of Mohammed, nor yet have they retrograded. With the fixity peculiar, I believe, to the Semitic families, of which we have such a remarkable and well-known example nearer home in the Israelitic race, they have remained exactly at the point they were; and thus have they retained, yet not improved, their primæval condition. For instance, a stranger who presents himself, like myself—What was I known as? I was known as a travelling doctor; an expression not exactly synonymous with a quack in that country. I might be a respectable person—that remained to be seen—and even a good doctor, for aught they knew. I was known in the town, generally speaking, as a Christian; for though, of course, in that country they never ask you directly what your religion is, that question not being considered polite, at the same time it is very easy to find out whether a man is a

Mohammedan or not, who is in a town where everybody is—according to an expression used in one of Captain Head's works—obliged, under the fear of the Lord and a broomstick, to attend daily at public worship, and if any person of the town is not present at the prayers he is sure to be well beaten: and thus any person absenting himself from them must give good reason for his doing so. I might have been a bad Mohammedan, but they seldom took the trouble to ascertain that. I was known, in consequence, as a native Syrian Christian. They knew that I came from Damascus; that I made no great secret of in the country, for I published it to everybody. I was there set down as a Christian of Damascus. Well, nobody said a single word that could possibly insult or reflect either upon the religion or upon the country to which I was supposed to belong, although I was supposed to belong to the Sultan's Government, with which they were almost at war, and to come from a country with which they had no sympathy, and to belong to a religion regarded by them as infidel. I met with the kindest reception and treatment almost everywhere. I was very hospitably received, very kindly treated, and well lodged. The dwellings there are not tents, but very respectable houses made of unbaked bricks, because in a country where there is little rain, indeed, scarcely any at all, and the tenacious soil becomes as hard as any stone under the influence of the sun—for in these regions you may imagine what the sun does—there is no need of baked bricks; and the houses are as firm and solid as any house in London. They are even built with a certain kind of architectural beauty; they are also very respectably furnished with carpets, cushions, and everything else that will conduce to the comfort of the inhabitants. Nobody can enter without permission. They have locks and double locks upon their outer and inner doors. They have often a garden in the court of the house, in which they sit and take the air, as they might in many European towns. In fact, there is a certain amount of exterior comfort. I remained there fifty days, and should have remained there very well contented, and very well viewed by everybody, were it not for the singular character of this Government, occasioned by the particular fanaticism which has developed the Wahabite power, and which ultimately caused me to leave the country in rather a precipitate manner.

You know, of course, that about 100 years since, at the time when Arabia was in a perfect state of anarchy, and when religion had fallen into a strange state of confusion,—of which I will, please God, speak a little afterwards, when I have finished about the Wahabite, because it touches upon the point of the fire-worshipping:—at that time there arose a celebrated fanatic, Mohammed Ebn Abd-al-Wahab, who founded the Wahabite sect, but did not found the dynasty, as some have supposed, having been simply a religious teacher. He, by means of his doctrines and his teaching, having placed them in the hands of a very important chief of the neighbouring town of Derayeh, enabled that chief to become the founder of a new dynasty. This chief became the instrument—the means the sword—of propagating the doctrines of Mohammed Ebn Abd-al-Wahab, which are called the Wahabite doctrines, and which are, in fact, the purism of Mohammedanism—primitive Mohammedanism—such as it was at its first origin. There were, then, two families side by side—the family of the founder of the sect, and the family of the founder of the government. These two families remained together in the capital; the one exercising the religious functions generally existing in Mohammedan countries—I mean where Mohammedanism is strictly practised—such as the function of Imaum at the public prayers, a kind of preacher or sort of clerk, nothing more; or the function of judge, which also is, as you know, a semi-religious function in Mohammedan countries, legal questions being decided from the sacred book—the Koran; and the other exercising the governmental power of the country. There is no need to relate to you how this government was developed—how it conquered almost the whole of Arabia—how it quarrelled with the Turkish Government

—how Ibrahim Pasha was finally successful in invading the country and destroying the capital,—and how, after a long while, the shattered elements re-constructed themselves and formed the existing Wahabite Government, whose limits, although considerably extended, do not at the present day contain more than one-third of Arabia. From these two families radiates up to the present time the double principle in the capital; the reigning family representing the political and executive force, while the family of the original founder of the sect having no direct political position, nevertheless exercise an enormous religious influence in the town, and have always a great command throughout the empire, and even over the monarch himself; a force which they exercise in what one may call a narrow or fanatical manner, and in such a manner as to draw the cords tighter, and to render their nation more and more exclusive, and to foster the hatred of the nation against all who might not be of the same way of thinking as themselves.

About six years ago the cholera visited that country at the end of its world's journey. It took Central Arabia at last. The Arabs had never seen anything like it before. They had not at the moment the advantage of having such doctors as myself amongst them; and the result was that an enormous mortality took place. Of course they took fright, and the zealot party, who represented the family of the old sect, took occasion to say that this was a Divine vengeance upon the people for having relaxed from strict principles. What are their strict principles? In the first place, smoking tobacco is a deadly sin; and whatever you may imagine in the way of horror, of condemnation, or turpitude, comes entirely short of smoking tobacco. I am sorry to say that the cholera showed the necessity of something very severe being done to bring back the people to good order. They had begun to smoke tobacco, which in their eyes fully explained the invasion of the disease. To give you an idea of their hatred to smoking tobacco, I will relate a simple incident that occurred to myself. There was a very severe and zealous bigot, one of the family, who came to me to ask my advice upon a little affection of his throat, and my medicine had been successful. I had been about twenty days in the town, when one day when we were sitting together, I was determined to see what were their real thoughts about smoking tobacco, and what was their real standard of morality. So I appeared to be very anxious to inform myself of certain points in order to settle some scruples in my own mind; and after a suitable prelude, I began to say that the Syrians were very much divided as to the distinction between great and little sins—that distinction is to be found in the Mohammedan religion as well as in the Christian—the great sins being those that are punished in the next world, and the little sins those which are to be expiated in this world by saying “God forgive me,” or the like. I stated that my own conscience was rather anxious in the matter; and I wished to know from my friend what he and his family conceived to be the distinction between great and little sins, and which were the great ones that were to be carefully avoided.

My friend looked very grave, as those people usually do; they have a very serious appearance, having their handkerchiefs always pulled down over their eyes; and so putting on an exceedingly serious, pharisaical look, in fact graver than usual, he said: “The greatest and first sin was Polytheism, or worshipping anything else but God.” I said that we all knew that Polytheism is the greatest of all sins; but, after that, what is the next great sin? Upon which my friend, without the slightest hesitation, answered that the second irremissible great sin was that of “drinking the shameful”—meaning smoking tobacco, smoking being called drinking, and the “shameful” being the synonym for tobacco; and consequently he stated this to be the second great sin. Whereupon I suggested, “and murder, theft, false witness, and similar actions?” “Oh!” answered he, “God is merciful; those are all little sins.” Hence the two only mortal sins were Polytheism and smoking. On the occa-

sion of the cholera-visit, already mentioned, it was said that it was all in consequence of smoking tobacco, and of wearing silk dresses; which is another dreadful sin, and entirely to be prohibited. As for the hatred to smoking tobacco, that, perhaps, might find an echo even nearer home; but as for wearing silk dresses, I fancy that even where tobacco is not liked, that would hardly pass. Then, again, swearing by another name but that of God is a positive idolatry, which renders a man worthy of death. Don't imagine on that account that they do not swear; but the natural result of this is, I am sorry to say, to make the transgression of the Commandment which forbids the taking of the name of God in vain, a great deal more common than it would otherwise be. They will swear on every occasion, and they bring the holy name in every moment. The Government was in a state of great anxiety, and considering that the cause of the cholera was due to the fact of pure and primitive Mahommedanism being no longer observed, they resolved that something should be done to stop its progress. On this occasion the reigning king, who is the son of Zurki, the son of Abd Allah Ebn Saoud, who was put to death at Constantinople, called together the gravest and most religious men of the capital, which may contain at the present day about thirty thousand inhabitants. It is a very beautiful and populous town. Except Damascus, I have never seen a town so beautifully situated than that of Riadh. Riadh means "The Gardens," from the lovely gardens which surround the town on every side. The King, then, called together his council, and said:—"I discharge my conscience upon you. I cannot myself look after all the religious observances and exact moral condition of each town or individual in my empire. I have called for you as the most respectable, most venerable, and most important of my people, and I discharge my conscience on your conscience, and I charge you before God to see to it." The most absolute kings are generally the most constitutional, because they are obliged to be so. On this occasion a council of twenty-two was formed. These twenty-two were to be chosen from the most unspotted, the most fanatic characters that could be found in the town; and several of them were of the family of Mohammed Ebn Abd-al-Wahab. They had full power given them, censorial power, like that in the old Roman time, full and absolute power to examine into and to punish whatever offences might be committed against morals and religion in the towns, in the provinces, in the empire; and all this was by delegation. They were immediately all armed, as a symbol of their power, with a long rod, a rod which was rarely suffered to be idle, attended by a quantity of satellites, bearing in their hands the sticks of palm-tree, no despicable cudgels, and a common implement of fighting in the East. They were commissioned to examine into the public and the private life of everybody, without distinction, beginning from the royal family downwards, and punish every one whom they found guilty. The brother of the King, in whose house I had been lodging, was convicted of having smoked tobacco, and was publicly hoisted and beaten at his own palace-gate by these people. One of the principal members—I won't say of the Cabinet, because I do not wish to insult English names by using them in this way, but I don't know how else to explain myself, for they are a ministerial body; there is a minister for external affairs, a minister of the interior, and others; it is really a kind of cabinet—well! one of the principal ministers, who had charge of the treasury, was so well beaten that he died the next day, because it was proved against him that he had committed some offence of an analogous character. Many others were put to death at the same time. Prayers five times a-day were enforced also on pain of beating, generally severe, in case of non-compliance. Even talking in a private house after evening prayers until morning prayers was prohibited, everybody being supposed after saying his last word in prayer, before going to sleep like a good Mohammedan, and not to talk again until the morning. In the streets of the capital and of the principal towns, up to the present moment, children cannot

play. Everywhere else throughout the world you see them playing:—in this town alone they cannot; or if they do play, it is at going through the form of prayer, having no other form of diversion but that. The strictest and severest discipline that could be imagined was enforced, and, of course, the natural result followed, that an enormous amount of vice and profligacy increased in the town, much more than had been before, as always will happen.

If you wish to have an idea of the children of the country I will give you an instance. One of the principal dogmas or opinions of these Wahabites is this,—the absolute, universal, all-pervading, all-existing, power of the Divinity in everything; that is to say, that nothing is angelic or human, or even animal action, not even physical—everything is divine. For instance, if I take up a pen, it is not I that take it up—of course I am speaking now in the Wahabite sense—in their sense, literally speaking, God takes up the pen. Again, if I lay it down, the same. If a man writes, it is not the man, but God that writes. If fire burns, the fire does not burn of itself, but it is God that effects the burning. If a stone falls, it is the same. And from this, in consequence, springs up the most absolute system of fatalism that can be imagined. I said that I would give you an idea of the children of the country, that you may see how they grow under that kind of teaching. One day my companion and myself—it was in the month of October, when the heat was still considerable, though it afterwards rapidly diminishes, so that in December it was already cold enough to have fires in the evening; however, in October it was still very hot, when one long day, after having been giving advice from morning to the afternoon, of course obtaining at the same time non-medical information from the people, and feeling very tired, for there had been a crowd of people during the day, about 3 o'clock I shut up the house and the shop, for the shop and the house were all one, and walked out of the town with my companion, to hide ourselves in a grove of palm-trees in one of the neighbouring gardens—there, of course in private, to enjoy the nicotian weed, which we could not do in the town; for, although it was known, I am sorry to say, by the fatal testimony of the vapour that it always produces, that I did smoke, at the same time I took care not to do so offensive a thing before them. My companion and I, who was as bad as myself in that respect, had retired from the crowd, and got out of the town and beyond the walls, and coasting along the gardens, turned aside into a nice little orchard, where we sat down under a palm-tree, lit our pipes, and enjoyed ourselves. While sitting there we saw, to our great dismay, a lad about twelve years of age—one of the poor lads of the town—walking about not far off; and, seeing us from a distance, of course he came up to talk with us, for an Arab is the most sociable creature in the world: he cannot avoid talking, especially to a stranger, and he will always converse in a friendly manner. Well, this boy saw us, so I said to my companion, "He won't matter, this is a poor fellow; we can go on with our smoking before him." We continued smoking, and the lad came up, habited in the dress of the country, a long kind of robe, resembling more a night-gown than anything else—a long shirt, fitting quite closely at the collar, and reaching down to the feet, and a kind of handkerchief about his head. The lad came up and made his salaam. He was spinning a peg-top on his hand. He saluted us; we answered his salute. He wanted to talk, but he did not know exactly what to say; sometimes people are thus awkward at their first meeting. So, in order to introduce a subject, he took his top in his hand and spun it on his left hand, then took it upon his right-hand forefinger, and keeping it spinning while holding it up, he said to us, "Not by my strength, nor by my cleverness, but by the strength of God, and by the cleverness of God." Whereupon my companion answered, "You have set God to work for very little." From this little incident you can thoroughly understand how that way of thinking prevails among the people of those countries from their

earliest years, and you may judge how far it renders them incapable of change or advancement.

Well, I said I would say a word or two about the town, and the manner in which I left the town; for in that manner the character of the country can best be exhibited. I had remained about thirty days in the town, and during that time was strongly supported by the Royal party, that is to say, the governmental party of the town, because I had cured a great many of them; and I was almost every evening at the palace, either with the King or with some of his own people, and was looked upon in a favourable light. At the same time those twenty-two zealots, I cannot call them fanatics—fanatics is a general word, they were officially so, not only fanatics in matter of fact, but fanatics because of their position—but, however, those were my enemies, because they knew me to be a Christian, or what they called a dangerous person—a revolutionist, a person to be looked on with suspicion, who probably is machinating something against the church or state, or against both; in which conjecture they were not very far wrong, although it was not to my interest to tell them so. The fact was these men were always working against me as much as they could; and I was upheld for a long time by the Royal party. However, the waters began to get troubled.

The first symptom I had of suspicion in the Royal party and the King himself was this. I had notice given me that those who went to that country hardly ever returned, and that scarcely anybody, in the first place, ever got admittance to the capital, much less to the presence of the King; but when one did, one was in danger of two things: either of being put to death, which is by no means an uncommon thing in that town, for the present King has put to death a great many after inviting them; or if you are supposed to be a person whom, on the one hand, they are afraid of, or, on the other hand, whom they have too much regard for to put to death, they offer you a house, and attendants, and wife; and when you are once fixed in the town, once married, you are caught, and cannot get out again. I once met, myself, a very clever fellow, a native of Bokhara, who had been caught in that manner, and who wishing to get away could not do so, being tied by those chains which are well known to be the strongest. The first symptom, then, I had of mistrust manifested itself in this way. I had a particular invitation to go and see the King, at rather an unusual hour, in the palace. The King, after a long preamble of the services which I had already rendered, the great effect which my medicines had produced, and so forth, told me that I was too valuable a person to lose; and he offered me then and there a fine house with attendants, and servants, and with an honourable alliance in the town. Of course, I understood what that meant. I fought off as best I could, and so effectually that the King was obliged to accept my refusal. However, I felt from that moment that I was becoming an object of suspicion. The next thing which got me into bad odour with the King was a thing which I had a great deal of difficulty not to do. While I was playing, so to speak, the part of the poor dependant man amongst these people, I could not help letting it very often appear that I was more independent than I ought to have seemed. Now about this time one of the King's horses had had a kick in the shoulder which had festered, and had produced a certain equine disease. The King asked me whether I could cure the horse. I was too glad to get hold of an opportunity to see the Royal stables. They are in some respects the first stables of the world. It is well known that the first breed is the Arabian breed, and the best of the Arabian breed is the Nejed; and, of course, the very best of the Nejed breed would be at the stables of the King himself. Whatever one can imagine in the way of perfect beauty of horses, I was now privileged to see. I never could have imagined such perfect animals, although I have seen the very best horses of the sort which are imported into Europe. Those which go to Europe are either, like those which go to France, of the Algeria or Barbary breed, or like

those which are sent from Syria to breed in the desert to the north of Arabia running up towards Damascus and so on; but never was a Nejed horse sent to Europe, and they never will be. They are never sold by any chance, neither male nor female—they never sell a horse of that breed. They are only to be got in one of these ways: either in war, or as a present, or a heritage from father to son; they are never sold and never bartered. They are a small breed, not very high; I believe never above 15 hands 2 fingers; none of them approached 16 hands. About 14 or 15 hands in height would be the average. The prevailing colour is gray. I did not see a single dark bay; chesnut a fair amount, grey very common, mottled not altogether uncommon, very few white, and still fewer black. I did not see a full bay among them. The principal features of the race are the excessive cleanness of the legs—in this more resembling a stag's legs than a horse's—the fulness of the haunches, the extraordinary delicacy of the muzzle, the beautiful set-on of the tail, and the extreme slope of the shoulder-blade, which gives the animal a pliancy such as I never saw in any other breed, very different from the Persian breed, and even from what is called the Arabian breed of Upper Arabia. I had full leisure for examining the King's stables. There were in the stables about 130 horses, and there were a great many others that were not present.

After looking them over I asked to see my sick horse, and it was shown me. I gave some slight prescription, and thus got another opportunity to visit the stables. After that the King pressed me very much to go on with the cure. I said I had seen the horse; and I felt I was compromising my own position very seriously in doctoring an animal for a disease that I knew little about. I was obliged to explain to the King that doctoring a horse was one thing and doctoring a man was another. The King insisted upon my doctoring the horse. At last I got angry and I said, "Your Majesty must please to remember that in this country I am a doctor for asses and not for horses." The King understood the joke perfectly well, and it did not please him.

Matters went on in this way until at last they came to a crisis, which obliged me to leave the country. The King had already become a little indisposed towards me. Those who were my enemies of course took every occasion to turn the King against me, and at last they found the means of doing so. There was a man in the town who had a species of facial palsy, of a kind which I judged might be treated, according to some practitioners, by an external application of strychnine. Everybody knows the exceedingly small quantities in which such a drug can be administered even externally, as well as the exceedingly powerful effect which it produces, let the administration be the most cautious. The man whom I had to deal with was nearly deaf, besides having an impediment in his speech. I judged that an external application of strychnine with appropriate treatment would produce a good effect, if applied in the manner which anybody in the faculty can understand. Of course the effect was very strong, as might have been expected. I must remark, that with the Arabs you may always double the dose, because they have very strong constitutions. The effect was such, that after four or five days the individual entirely recovered the use of his tongue, and was able to take part in conversation. The patient's hearing was also very nearly restored, and he was in fact going on very well.

This produced a great effect in the town. Everybody was very much surprised, and especially that so much effect had been produced by so small a quantity of medicine. The fame of the cure reached the King. The King sent for me; and as his Majesty was fond of dabbling in medicine, and wanted to understand more about it, he was very curious to know what this wonderful drug was, and asked me to give him some of it, so that after I was gone some of his people might use it. I of course fought shy, from the natural feeling which anybody would have of putting such things into the hands of an ignorant man; and, without reflecting on what consequences my words

might have, somewhat rashly explained to the King the exceedingly dangerous nature of the drug, and that it was one of the most deadly poisons known. He had hardly heard that, when, lifting up the handkerchief which I wore over my head, and lifting up his own, which is the custom when people want to talk a secret in Arabia in a manner inaudible to those present, he whispered in my ear, "Give me some of it!"—in a most unmistakeable tone.

Now the King had very powerful enemies in the Court, and these enemies were in the town at the very time. It was well known that he would be exceedingly glad to get rid of them, and that they also would be glad to get rid of him; and it was known that he was a man who stuck at nothing, who had put his own guests to death in his own house, and consequently he was a person perfectly capable of using the poison, if not in a legal, at any rate in another way.

I feigned not to understand what he meant, and to imagine that his enormous zeal to have it was entirely to do good. So I fought off, and said, "I am afraid you would not know how to use it, nor understand the proper proportions," and so on. Like a judicious man, he did not press the subject any farther. The next day he brought it on again, and again I put him off. The third day he again brought forward the subject in question, and asked me for the third time to give him some of the drug, saying, "I believe you really do mean to leave the country shortly, and you must first give me some of it." I lost patience, being very provoked at his asking me again and again to give him the poison after my repeated refusal. So I told him positively, and in the most solemn manner I could assure him, that I would never give it to him. He still insisted; whereupon I looked him in the face, and said, "Abd-Allah, I know perfectly well what you want it for, and I don't want to be your accomplice in what you will have to answer for before God's judgment seat, nor to be charged with crimes that you will be charged with. You shall never have it." At these words his face changed in a frightful manner, and became positively black. He looked more than words could say. However, he added nothing more for the moment. With customary Arab self-possession he said nothing, and swallowed the insult. I on my part dropped the subject, and after sitting a while I got up and took my leave; but I saw that such a conversation must necessarily lead to sinister results—in a word, that I had committed myself.

The next day and the day after I had no further news from the palace. On the third day, at night, between nine and ten, I was sent for suddenly to the palace, and was informed that I was to go alone. I told my companion to keep awake, and to keep the fire up, because it was the end of November, and "that there would be news to-night." So I went alone to the palace. When I got there I found the King sitting in an inner chamber, by the light of a fire. Around him and in front of him were sitting my most deadly enemies, including the great-grandson of the founder of the sect, who, as the Arabs say, would willingly have eaten me raw, could he have done it. There were two or three others of the same stamp who hated me as much as they could, and a few others who were my friends as long and as much as his Majesty should please to be so. All this was at night, and in an interior apartment. Of course when I entered I saluted the King. In these countries one does not use the long formulas of Turkish salutation, which are considered by the Wahabite as derogatory to the honour which ought to be paid to the Supreme Being alone. Instead of saying "My prince," they say, "Peace be with you, thou who art guarded" (*i.e.*, "by God"); no other title is allowed. He answered my salutation very coldly, and told me to sit down. I sat down close by him, on which he turned round to me, and began by saying, "I know perfectly well what your real object is; it is not medicine, nor anything of the kind: you are really a revolutionist. You come here against our Government and against our religion. You know the penalty is death, and I shall put the law in execution against you, and have you executed without delay." His saying so put me in mind of

the proverb, "Threatened folks live long." I thought it was hardly probable he would do it at the time, though he might put his threat in execution a little later. So I thought the best thing was to seem unmoved. I looked at him, and merely answered him with the common phrase in the East, "Beg pardon of God!" It means, when a person says anything foolish, "Beg pardon of God for saying such foolish things." He looked surprised, and said, "Why?" I said, "How could you kill me? You dare not." He said, "Why can't I? why dare I not?" I said, "Because I am your guest; have been lodged in your house; have been employed by yourself, and as such I am known to everybody in the town, and looked up to by everybody in the town, even by you. *You* talk of putting me to death! It is perfectly ridiculous! You cannot do it, and you dare not." He answered me that it might be done without its being known that he did it, and that he had the means if he chose. Upon which I answered him that he could not do even that. He asked, "Why?" "Because," I said, "there are several sitting here who have heard what you say; they have tongues, and they will talk about it. I will take care meanwhile to let everybody know what you have said to me to-night, and if anything happens to me in the whole region which lies between this town and the Persian Gulf, it will be known who has done it." I added, "Your brother will be the first to know it." His brother was almost as powerful as himself, his most deadly enemy, and the very person whom he wished to kill. After half an hour's more conversation, much in this style, I left him.

Of course I understood that there was no remaining long in the place after such an outbreak, so I took counsel with my companion, and with an individual whose name is mentioned in the *Journal*, Khalef Ebn Aisa, our guide. We agreed not to show the white feather, by leaving the town immediately, but to keep quiet, and go on doctoring the people of the second and third ranks of society for the next two or three days, and then secretly to get away. So we remained three days, attracting as little notice as possible, and keeping mainly in-doors. On the third day we took the opportunity of the long evening prayer, when everybody was in the mosque; and having got our camels ready beforehand, we mounted on their backs and left the town; before the prayers were finished we were a good way off, and night was setting in. Other arrangements were made, which enabled us to escape the notice of the King until we were quite beyond the reach of anything like pursuit.

I am afraid I have trespassed too much upon your time. However, I have been requested to say a word about the fire-worshippers, and that form of religion which exists in Arabia. This is an interesting subject, especially in this point of view, viz., that I do not know that anybody has mentioned or stated it in a distinct manner, and I was myself exceedingly surprised by what I saw of it.

The first circumstance I noticed was this. Of course you have all heard—it is a thing which is always said—that the Mohammedan religion, strictly speaking, is only practised in its rigorous forms in the towns and villages; that the Bedouins or nomad Arabs have only the name of Mohammedans, without the practices. Now I found that many of the tribes, before we came to the country where, properly speaking, that form of religion is dominant, still kept up something of the old religious usages which existed in Arabia before the time of Mohammed. This I had not suspected. However, such was the case. I do not know whether any European, except the gentleman whose name was mentioned by the President, Dr. Wallin, who travelled over a part of the same country as myself,—I do not know that any European has ever been precisely into the part of the desert which lies towards the Jäuf and beyond it. However that may be, I can assure you that anybody who should travel there under the appearance of a Mohammedan, or pretending in any way to uphold what would have to do with the Mohammedan religion, would never rightly know what the religious practices of the nomad tribes in that part of

Arabia are,—for this simple reason, that in those countries which are still frontier to the Turkish empire, though not belonging to it, Mohammedanism being the State religion, and being rigorously maintained by the State, nobody of Arab race dares, generally speaking, to profess himself openly of any other creed. Much in the same way, a traveller in Syria itself, meeting with a Druse, or those remarkable sects which abound in that region, would be often told by them that they are Mohammedans, simply in order that they may not get the bad name of being anything else, and because they are afraid of being reported. In the same way the Bedouins or nomad Arabs, who are very timid and cautious, and exceedingly afraid of getting into a scrape, will very often say in a general way, "We are Mohammedans," in order not to compromise themselves with a traveller whom they believe to be a Mohammedan, or more or less a friend of the Turkish Government, which is a Mohammedan Government. In that case, though they would not know how to say Mohammedan prayers, they yet would always call themselves Mohammedans.

Having said this by way of explanation, I was myself fully known in that part of the country as a Christian of Damascus, and as an individual who, as they themselves frequently judged, might have committed some great civil crime at Damascus, and had escaped from the pursuit of Government, in order to take refuge in Arabia. Though such a supposition was not very honourable to my character, I readily allowed it to pass uncontradicted, as the most convenient screen that could be imagined. Consequently, I put no restraint upon them.

The first thing I remarked, and it surprised me very much, was with respect to a great number of these nomad tribes in the north of the central part of Arabia, that their only form of religion was to turn to the sun morning and evening; that is, exactly at the moment that the sun's disc arises, counting from the moment when the first ray appears above the horizon to the moment when the disc is complete, they turned their faces to the sun, and alternately recited certain prayers; repeating the same again, when the sun is setting in the evening. Everybody knows that to say prayers at the moment the sun's disc is rising or setting, is strictly forbidden by the Mohammedan religion; the prayers are either said a little before or a little after sunrise and sunset—generally speaking, a little after; because it is supposed, in Mohammedan tradition, that the sun rises and sets between the horns of Eblis, and consequently, whoever prays at that moment is supposed to pray to his Satanic Majesty's horns. Every morning and evening these Arabs said their prayers—not turning their faces to the Caaba at Mecca, which is the point to which the Mohammedans turn, but turning to the sun; and these prayers are addressed by them to some divinity supposed to reside in the sun. I often heard the prayers themselves. I was enabled to write them down. They were simple forms of adoration and of petition, addressed in the name of God towards the sun. I do not say exactly to the sun, but towards the sun.

Another point of religion which they had, and which they talked about very freely to me, as well as among themselves, was the practice of sacrifice at the tombs of their relations; not at the tombs of any supposed saints, or anything of that kind, such as may be found existing in Mohammedan countries, but at the tombs of their nearest relations. These sacrifices were generally annual, commemorative of the death or the individual, and consisting of sheep or camels. The object was to put themselves in communication with the souls or spirits of the dead, a certain Eastern form of spiritualism, and rather barbarous, though not less superstitious than the Western one.

Going on and entering Arabia I found these practices very general. When I got into the kingdom of Shomer or Hail, among the stationary inhabitants, I found the same practices very generally existing in the villages, but not in the principal towns; and they added to it the worship of trees. I was shown one tree which had received honours for powers far above its own nature, especially when rain did not fall. This tree was supposed to answer their

prayers by sending it. Dances were performed round the trunk, and prayers addressed to it that it might procure rain. It was not a palm-tree ; it was one of those large thorny trees common in Arabia, and named the "Zulh ;" it is a kind of acacia. I was not so much surprised at these forms of religion in themselves as at their being so wide-spread. They are vestiges of the old religion which covered the principal parts of Arabia before the time of Mohammedanism.

When I got further on, after passing through the Wahabite kingdom, where again I found Mohammedanism, and drawing towards the Omàn kingdom, on the Persian Gulf, I once more lit upon the practices of fire-worshipping and of worshipping the sun. They worshipped fire in this manner : they lighted fires upon sacred peaks and mountains, danced round them, and worshipped them. Only in one case did I get permission to be present at the ceremony. I found it was generally practised on the first day of the month, which seemed the day set particularly apart for celebrating these ceremonies. I could not discover in the country any regular priesthood, such as exists in India or in Persia, nor anything of the Persian dualism of the two principles, the Good Principle and the Evil Principle. It seems to me an old form of Sabæaniam, the simple worship of the element of fire, whether in itself, or in the sun, or in the planets.

Another thing that I noticed, and it was a very remarkable one, exceedingly surprised me. I have since mentioned it to a very learned and well-known professor at Oxford, and he was unable to give me any explanation of it. I had seen notices in some of the Mahomedan books that the Sabæans when they prayed, turned to the north and not to the sun alone. Now I found these people in the interior of the country very often, not at morning and evening prayers—when they prayed, properly speaking, to the disc of the sun,—but at other times, praying with their faces to the north ; and not only that, but they gave the North Star the name which in the Hebrew Bible, in the Book of Exodus, is attributed as the uncommunicable title of God, the well-known name composed of the letters J A H. That name was given by them to the North Star, probably from an idea of its fixity, as being the only fixed point in the heavens, around which the rest of the universe seemed to turn. From that circumstance, they had given it the name of J A H. I only repeat what they say ; for God forbid that any one should make anything like an improper allusion to the very name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in sacred history.

This fact, along with its natural explanation from the character of the North Star, and with the practice of their turning to the north, as well as the particularly simple form of fire-worship that exists, made me believe that this is not a new form of religion, but a wreck of the old Sabæan religion, which, as is well-known, overspread almost the whole of Arabia before Mohammed's time ; for before his time idolatry, in its grosser form, was confined almost exclusively to the narrow strip near the Red Sea, where certain idols of rough hewn stone were adored, and of which some vestiges are still to be found. But the rest of Arabia practised fire-worship ; and thus—though without having sufficient exact critical data to give entire certainty, yet as far as I could judge by other details which are too long and too particular to be entered into at the present moment—I cannot doubt that these are the remains of the old Sabæan religion which had formerly occupied almost the whole of Arabia, and which we see yet exists in the lower part of Central Arabia, as well as in the eastern and southern provinces which form the kingdom of Omàn. The latter is a very rich and beautiful province, the most beautiful part of Arabia I have seen, much resembling the Indian coast, and almost separated from the rest of Arabia by an enormous expanse of desert. Consequently, the Mohammedan influence has been but faintly felt there, and the people have maintained themselves in the old religion. Ethnological considerations may also have had

something to do with it; and these perhaps may be described on another occasion.

I must here mention the existence in Arabia of those circular ranges of huge stones, well known in some parts of England and Brittany, of which Stonehenge is a familiar example. Of such I met with one in the Kasim near the town of Rass; two enormous blocks, set on end, supported a third, so high that I passed under it on my camel's back; some blocks have a transverse mass across their top, others stand alone, many lie scattered in the valley. Those yet upright form the segment of a circle; their average height is about 12 to 14 feet. On my inquiry if similar ruins existed elsewhere, I was told of two others at some distance, but in the same province. The Arabs considered them as belonging to the ancient and gigantic races whom they believe to have once occupied the land; but could give no approximative date. Similar vestiges might, I feel sure, be discovered in the interior of Omàn, and other southern provinces.

Sir HENRY RAWLINSON said at so late an hour he should not attempt to detain the Meeting with any lengthened observations; but merely in a few words add his testimony to that of Sir Roderick Murchison as to the extraordinary merits of the address they had just heard. It contained an immense amount of entirely new matter to himself, and was as interesting as anything he had ever heard in that room. His own experience of Arabia was confined mainly to the upper desert during a residence of twelve years at Bagdad. He had come into contact with a great number of Bedouin chiefs from Jebel Shomer and other parts of Arabia; and he could bear witness to the minute accuracy of many of the facts which Mr. Palgrave had mentioned respecting them. Although it was not generally known, yet there had been previous instances of gentlemen travelling across Arabia. The first instance he knew was that of Captain Sadleir, who crossed from Katif, by Medina, to Jiddah. According to the tradition of the Arab chiefs in the north, he passed through absolutely as a bale of goods. He was consigned at Katif to the agent at Jiddah, and was passed from one chief to the other, labelled and receipted; and in that way he reached the opposite coast—as they might suppose with no very great advantage to science or geography. On another occasion three medical gentlemen came with Khurshid Pasha in 1838 and 1839. They crossed the whole peninsula also; but they were merely with the army, and had not the advantage of coming in contact with the chiefs of the Bedouin tribes as Mr. Palgrave had. So that Mr. Palgrave might really lay claim to being the first traveller who had utilised his travels in Arabia. The practice of sun-worship was well-known to him. It existed in all parts, not only in the deserts of Arabia, but up to the Sinjars and Mardin hills. With regard to the other point, the worship of fire, he did not think that was a genuine Arab custom. He believed the people on the coast of Oman must have imbibed fire-worship from the opposite coast. The Persians, when they were overcome by the Mohammedans retreated, some of them to India; others to inaccessible places in the deserts where they could find refuge; and some, probably, to those precipitous rocks along the coast of Arabia from Muscat to Shohar. He could not think it was an Arab custom. The Sabæans of Arabia were not at all the same as the Mohammedan Sabæans. The people, that is, described by the Mohammedans as Sabæans, had nothing to do with the old Sabæans of Arabia; they were merely a remnant of the ancient Assyrian population, whose head-quarters were at Harran. Mr. Palgrave had also spoken of idolatry; the Arab books were full of accounts of idolatry in different parts of the country, and the Himyaritic Inscriptions testified to a general idolatry along the southern coast of Arabia. There was only one other point he should like to mention; it was in reference to the Arabian horse. He felt some interest in the subject, because he had brought home, and had still in his stable, what he considered and what was considered in the country a pure specimen of the El Nejed breed.

MR. PALGRAVE: From whom did you get it?

SIR H. RAWLINSON said he brought it from Bagdad. It was a present. It might not belong to the chief breed, but it certainly is a Nejed horse. It is not one of those beautiful white creatures that Mr. Palgrave mentioned; but it is a bay, which appears to be a colour taboo in the chief's stable.

MR. PALGRAVE: I saw none there.

SIR H. RAWLINSON remarked, the Nejed was an enormous province containing a third of Arabia, and of course there must be horses of different breeds. There may be different breeds of the Nejed, the same as there are of other breeds; and some of the horses that have come from Nejed are bay. He was particularly struck with Mr. Palgrave's description of the chief's stable, the merits of which he had often heard mentioned. He could only reiterate what Sir. Roderick Murchison had said, that Mr. Palgrave's address was about as important and interesting as any he had ever heard in that room.

The PRESIDENT formally conveyed the thanks of the Society to Mr. Palgrave for his communications, which that gentleman briefly and appropriately acknowledged.

In adjourning the Meeting to the 14th March, the PRESIDENT felt himself bound to remark, that the extraordinary adventures of Mr. Palgrave, coupled as they were with such striking sketches of the inner life of these primitive Mohammedans, the Wahabites, fully entitled him, the President, to declare that, whilst this narrative had conveyed to the meeting much valuable knowledge, it had at the same time produced such a deep interest in all who were present, that it might be also set down as the Thousand and Second of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

[For further particulars relating to the subject of Mr. Palgrave's paper, see Rev. G. P. Badger's letter, and Mr. Palgrave's reply thereto, in "Additional Notices," pp. 97-105.]

Eighth Meeting, March 14, 1864.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, K.C.B., PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

PRESENTATIONS.—*Sir Frederick Halliday; Lord Gilbert Kennedy; the Hon. C. H. Tracey.*

ELECTIONS.—*Capt. J. P. Basevi, R.E.; Edward Blore, Esq., F.R.S.; George Gladstone, Esq.; Major W. Goodenough, R.A.; Charles Lambert, Esq.; Rev. J. H. Marsden; Alfred Parish, and George Ridley, Esqrs.*

ACCESSIONS TO LIBRARY.—'Eight Years in Asia and Africa, from 1846 to 1855,' and 'Three Years in America,' by J. J. Benjamin. 'A Compendium of Mathematical Geography,' by A. H. Dick, M.A. 'The Naturalist on the Amazons,' by Henry W. Bates. Stevenson's 'South America.' Continuation of 'Transactions,' &c.

ACCESSIONS TO MAP-ROOM since last Meeting (Feb. 22).—New Zealand—Map of the Neighbourhood of the Waikato River. Sketch of the Ground at Rangiriri, showing the action of Nov. 20, 1863. Denmark—Island of Alsen, lithographed at the War Office, and presented through Sir E. Lugard. India—Chart of Bombay Harbour, and Report on the better Lighting of the Port; by Captain W. C. Barker. France—Plan of the Military Operations at Bayonne

in 1814, on rollers; presented by Sir R. I. Murchison. Atlas by H. Moll, on 62 sheets; presented by S. M. Drach, Esq. World, on Mercator's projection (printed in colours by Berghaus and Stülpenagel); by purchase. Atlas—Fortified Towns of Europe, on 25 sheets, 1565; by purchase. Africa—Five Views, coloured, of Free Town, Sierra Leone (Ackerman); by purchase. Atlas—Zur Industrie und Handelsgeographie, 3 sheets; by Drs. Klein and Lange. Netherlands—10 sheets of the Topographical Atlas; presented by Chev. T. Swart, H.C.M.R.G.S. Continuation of the Ordnance Survey Maps.

EXHIBITIONS.—Three larger-sized Photographs to illustrate Lieut. Palmer's Paper, viz.:—Town of Victoria, Vancouver Island; Treasury and Assay Offices, New Westminster, British Columbia; Holy Trinity Church, New Westminster, British Columbia.

The first Paper read was—

“ Vancouver Island ; its Physical Geography, Climate, and Mineral Resources.” By Dr. C. FORBES, R.N.

AFTER noticing the contradictory statements current as to our Pacific colonies in North America, the Paper described the abrupt character of the seaboard scenery of Vancouver, alternating with numerous fiord-like harbours, that had been worn in the metamorphic and trap rocks which form the basis of the island. The inland or north-eastern shore, on the other hand, is more undulating, attesting the existence of sedimentary rocks, chiefly carboniferous sandstone with occasional belts of limestone. The face of the country is almost uniformly covered with dense forest; but tracts of grass-land are occasionally met with, and lovely lakes and tarns abound. The very irregular configuration of the coast precludes the possibility of a navigable river being found anywhere throughout the island; what streams there are being usually winter-torrents, dry in summer, but with a little management capable of supplying water-power throughout the year—possibly to be utilised in the future for much-needed irrigation of many portions. Owing to the clay-subsoil, there are numerous springs “of excellent water.”

After glancing at the geological structure of the island, the main feature of which is that it is occupied throughout almost its whole length by a backbone of trap, the author pointedly calls attention to certain strongly-marked features of glacial action, where ice-drift has scooped out the hard trap-rock, and deposited enormous areas of trap and granitic boulders, chiefly at the south-eastern